



NEWS RELEASE

Release Number: 63

Release Date: **October 2, 2007**

JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF
CALIFORNIA
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Hundreds of Sonoma County Students See Supreme Court in Action Today

Special Educational Session Features Live TV Broadcast And Countywide School Education Program

Santa Rosa— More than 1,500 students from 22 public and private schools will attend a special oral argument session of the California Supreme Court today and tomorrow, October 2-3, at the Sonoma Country Day School, 4400 Day School Place, Santa Rosa.

For the seventh year in a row, the Supreme Court is conducting the program to improve public understanding of the state courts. The Superior Court of Sonoma County has collaborated with the high court in developing the educational program.

The Supreme Court has launched an educational Web site for the event, with online briefs and detailed case summaries in each case to be argued, at www.courtinfo.ca.gov/courts/supreme/sr-oralarg.htm.

During the past several weeks, 94 Sonoma County judges and attorneys have used these materials to brief students on the facts and legal issues in the cases.

LIVE TELEVISION BROADCAST

California Channel, a public affairs cable network, will broadcast oral arguments in five cases during both morning sessions in Santa Rosa. The cases involve issues ranging from free speech and breach of contract to death penalty proceedings.

The first morning also will feature a question-and-answer session with the students and justices. The network reaches 6.5 million viewers across the state and will offer a satellite link to facilitate coverage by other stations. Local viewing information is available at www.calchannel.com/carriage.htm.

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CASES TO BE TELEVISED

The cases to be broadcast live by California Channel include the following legal issues. To view online briefs and detailed case summaries prepared for this event, please see www.courtinfo.ca.gov/courts/supreme/sr-oralarg.htm.

Tuesday, October 2, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Fashion Valley Mall, LLC v. National Labor Relations Board et al. (S144753)—This “free speech” case concerns whether a shopping mall may prohibit people on its property from urging customers to boycott a store in the mall. A union representing a newspaper was prohibited from handing out leaflets in front of a department store at the Fashion Valley Shopping Mall in San Diego. The mall required the union to obtain a permit, which the mall would issue only if the union promised not to urge customers to boycott any of the stores in the mall. A federal appeals court in Washington, D.C. asked the California Supreme Court whether the California Constitution allowed the mall to require the union to promise not to urge customers to boycott the store.

Rico et al. v. Mitsubishi Motors Corp. et al. (S123808)—Plaintiffs sued defendants, automobile manufacturers, after a sport utility vehicle rolled over on a southern California freeway and caused them major injuries. The legal issue before the court, however, concerns whether plaintiffs properly made use of the opposing lawyer’s notes, after plaintiffs’ lawyers discovered those notes. The Supreme Court granted review to determine what action must be taken by an attorney who inadvertently receives privileged documents and whether disqualification of counsel and experts is an appropriate remedy under the circumstances of this case.

Wednesday, October 3, 2007, 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

In re Bell (Ronald Lee) on Habeas Corpus (S105569)—Ronald Lee Bell was convicted and sentenced to death for the murder of Raymond Murphy during the 1978 robbery of a jewelry store in Richmond. Bell shot Murphy, the store manager, and another employee and fled with more than \$30,000 worth of jewelry. After Bell’s conviction was affirmed on appeal by the California Supreme Court, he petitioned the court for a writ of habeas corpus—a postappeal procedure for overturning a criminal conviction. Bell claims that he is innocent of the robbery-murder that his brother Larry Bell committed the crime, and that eyewitnesses testified falsely at trial.

City of Stockton et al. v. Superior Court (Civic Partners Stockton, LLC, Real Party in Interest) (S139237)—A developer sued the City of Stockton, asserting that the city breached contracts for the redevelopment of a hotel and construction of a movie theater next to the hotel. The city argues that it cannot be sued because the developer neglected to notify the city by filing an administrative claim under the “Tort Claims Act” before filing a contract suit in court. The developer argues that no such claim was required because its underlying action is for breach of contract, and not for a “tort.”

People v. Watson (Joey R.) (S131052)—A state prison inmate, Joey Reuben Watson, was transferred to Atascadero State Hospital for acute mental health treatment. When he was being admitted to Atascadero, Watson lunged at and hit a nurse, committing a “battery.” The legal question before the court is whether, under the circumstances of this case, this crime should be classified as (a) a felony, with imprisonment of two to four years, or (b) a misdemeanor, with punishment of only six months’ incarceration. The answer to that question in turn depends upon how the court interprets the relevant Penal Code statutes, sections 4501.1, 4504, and 6082.

The Supreme Court’s complete October 2007 calendar with case summaries appear available on the California Courts Web site at:

www.courtinfo.ca.gov/courts/calendars/documents/SOCTA07.PDF.

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